DISCOURSE ECONOMY

Universal basic income is working — even in red states

Chelsea Jia Feng/Insider

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Oct 29, 2023, 4:30 AM CDT

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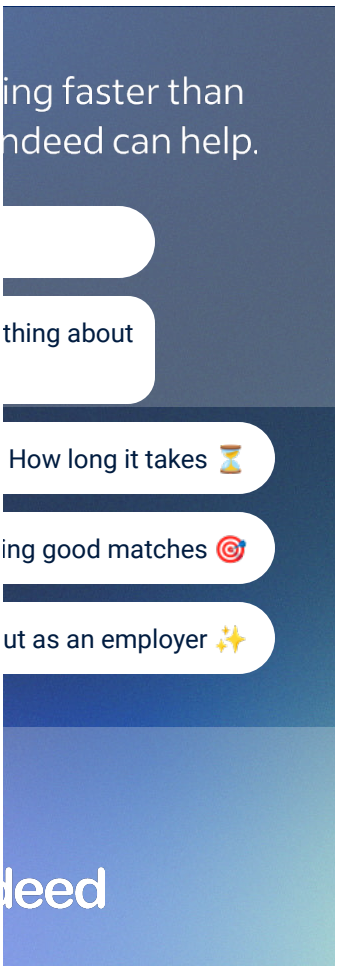
n the spring of 2022, Tydricka Lewis finally bought a car that started every time she a

relial ises required her to be able to get places
six ye r new life outside prison, where she'd spent
dulent checks.

It wa mother of three, would not otherwise have
been cted for Durham, North Carolina's
guara w exactly where her $600 monthly stipend
woul

tisement


In lat pledged $15 million to the national

recei ...r $500,000 from local philanthropy and the city's

Durh ...ny Middleton, who helped oversee the prog ...o introduce a basic income for years. "We want ...hout any determination of virtue or vice attac

As D ...ny of its lower-income and Black residents have ...of the South's centers of Black commerce, with ...Hayti community, home to the renowned histo ...niversity, Durham has become much whiter — by ...to US Census data. And as wealthier resid ...ne price rose by more than 50% between 2010

So th ...in basic-income funds would go to a single, vuln ...sidents.

Many ... As the program neared its launch in March 2022, ...flooded with messages filled with epithets. They ...e conservative counties near Durham to recei ...like New York City and the Bay Area. They dema ...writing criminals, disincentivizing work with ...ollars to help people who, in some opinions, migh

Midd ...adfast, simple, and by his own admission, "very

that s ...more sense than housing folks, monitoring
and f ...healthcare in prison."

He e ...at universal basic income from the same
"selfi ...umanity, your citizenship, and your
resid ...we will not allow you to fall under because
it's g

tisement

Thou ...me has proven to be good policy everywhere
it's b ...ogram would be one of its greatest tests yet.

...d guarantee all citizens a set amount of
...argins of American policy throughout the

In hi homas Paine argued that all citizens had the right became adults. During the Great Depr ng, proposed a guaranteed annual hous ne $40,000 to $60,000 in 2023). In 1972, wher ng for president, he proposed writing a $1,0C Though the concept faltered in the Reag conomics of the 1990s, talk of a universal basic residential-election campaign, when it beca idate Andrew Yang.

"W at it's cash, and you can use it for you need."

A lar 'we have a higher degree of inequality now than said Anna Jefferson, a principal investigator at Ab sic-income programs across the country.

In th e economic consequences wrought by the pand been put to the test. A few dozen cities acros ne programs, and the early results have been over than 800 of the city's most vulnerable resid to $1,000. So far the program has reduced hom bolstered the mental-health outcomes of parti n, California, had similar effects — the unen pants was nearly halved. Researchers at the Univ ogram concluded it could have "profound

Pilot ountry, from liberal strongholds such as Los
Ange l conservative cities like Columbia, South
Caro esville, Florida. Just Income, the Florida
prog erly incarcerated individuals, with a
ratio loridians about $28,000 a year to hold
some nesville program said in a press release
earli ting just $7,600 directly to one of our valued
neigl :" In city after city and cohort after cohort
— ol – universal basic income has improved
healt bolstered childcare opportunities (and
recip comes than control groups).

Acco — which she calls "unrestricted cash
trans st immediately. Early results from her firm's
analy n improve people's financial stress and
ment

With ojection, the evidence is overwhelming:
Univ niversally.

From -income program, which the city called
n residents 18 years or older, incarcerated
50% of the city's annual median incomee.
and t were randomly selected to be recipients,

tisement
RTISING

their ... in with StepUp — the Durham-based
nonp ... – or the city to explain how and where they
were ... k requirement and no surveys to fill out.
Recip ... led with $600 a month for a year — $7,200 to
spen

"Folk ... for their children, they bought medicine,
some ... on said. "Mostly, people did normal stuff;
they ... urprise." Others paid off long-standing
stude

Jeffe ... asic-income recipients across the country
spen ... pinpoint exactly where each dollar goes, the
vast ... he basics: healthier food, school supplies,
and e ... port for their children.

"Wha ... and you can use it for whatever you need,"
Jeffe

After ... Tydricka Lewis cobbled together a living by
holdi ... , including at a KFC and a Habitat for
Hum ... fter her release, she was certified as a peer-
supp ... a nonprofit that provides community
ment ... ent. She could have used her Excel money
to bu ... n, who were 18, 11, and 3. But she saw a car as
the ly ... vide for her family, a foundation to
hope ... she has been mired in for so much of her
life. ... f mind, knowing that she and her kids
woul ... r's heater fritzing out in the middle of
Durh

recid

e recipients have steadily climbed. And
ı, there was a zero-percent rate of

"E
are

ake better neighbors. When they
e going to pay their bills, they tend
your window at night."

Rese
comp
early
pilot
coun
milli
hope

nia studying the program plan to have data
trol group's outcomes in 2024. But based on
roll out a $750-a-month guaranteed-income
ı at home and fall beneath 30% of the
le, Middleton has secured another $1
initiative with public dollars, which he

Prom
Ame
resea
Cred
meas
roadl
$1,0C
trillic

chances of a truly *universal* basic income in
l evidence does not equal political will. UBI
ion not to renew the Covid-era Child Tax
monthly child poverty rate by 30% — as a
ide UBI would be. The main political
st story about UBI noted that "providing
ess of income" would cost more than $3
rnment's entire budget."

But a idence suggests that "pulling people out of
pove venue as well as savings on public
assis ed, if new pilot programs produce the same
resul may help sway the court of public opinion
yet. I s that guaranteed income "is reducing the
need les or criminal justice systems or burdens on
healt nat pays for itself."

As fo ed her the latitude to start her own
nonp offers peer support to the kinds of young
girls n from single-parent homes, and in some
cases Lewis has taken them to a Durham Bulls
basel parties, and helped them create vision
boar

Thou e ever has in her life, Lewis still struggles to
make ising tide has proven difficult. This
Septe o-bathroom apartment in Durham rose from
$1,48 ong with two of her children and a niece, to
move

wher on our way."

Mich r The New York Times, National
Geog id many others. He lives in Chapel Hill,
Nort children.

Abou

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fascir thought-provoking perspectives, informed by
analy course stories here.

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